

Tao Te King

Lao Tse

1

The Tao which can be expressed is not the unchanging Tao; the name which can be named is not the unchanging name.

The nameless is the beginning of the Heaven Earth; the mother of all things is the nameable.

Thus, while the eternal non-being leads toward the fathomless, the eternal being conduct to the boundary.

Although these two have been differently named they come from the same.

As the same they may be described as the abysmal. The abyss of the abysmal is the gate of all mystery.

2

When everyone in the world became conscious of the beauty of the beautiful it turned to evil; They became conscious of the goodness of the good and ceased to be good.

Thus not-being and being arise the one from the other. So also do the difficult and the easy; the long and the short; the high and the low; sounds and voices; the preceding and the following.

Therefore the Holy Man abides by non-attachment in his affairs, and practices a doctrine which cannot be imparted by speech. He attends to everything in its turn and declines nothing; produces without claiming; acts without dwelling thereon; completes his purposes without resting in them. Inasmuch as he does this he loses nothing.

3

When worth is not honoured the people may be kept from strife.

When rare articles are not valued the people are kept from theft.

When the desirable is left unnoticed the heart is not confused.

Therefore, the method of government by the Holy Man is to empty the heart, while strengthening the purpose; to make the will pliant, and the character strong. He ever keeps the people simple-minded and passionless, so that the world-wise do not dare to plan.

Practice non-action and everything will be regulated.

4

The Tao is as emptiness, so are its operations. It resembles non-fullness.

Fathomless! It seems to be the ancestor of all form.

It removes sharpness, unravels confusion, harmonizes brightness, and becomes one with everything.

Pellucid! It bears the appearance of permanence.

I know not whose son it is. Its Noumenon was before the Lord.

5

Nature is non-benevolent. It regards the masses as straw dogs.
The Holy Man is non-benevolent. He regards the masses as straw dogs.
The space between the heaven and the earth is like a bellows; though unsupported, it does not warp;
when in motion the more it expels.
Though words could exhaust this theme, they would not be so profitable as the preservation of its inner
essence.

6

The Valley-God never dies. She may be styled the Mother of the Abyss. The Abysmal Mother's orifice
may be called the Root of the Heaven-Earth.
Continuous she is as though ever abiding, and may be employed without weariness.

7

Nature continues long. What is the reason that Nature continues long? Because it produces nothing for
itself it is able to constantly produce.
It is for this reason that the Holy Man puts himself in the background; yet he comes to the front. He is
indifferent to himself; yet he is preserved.
Is it not because he has no interests of his own that he is able to secure his interests?

8

The highest goodness resembles water. Water greatly benefits all things, but does not assert itself.
He approximates to the Tao, who abides by that which men despise.
He revolutionizes the place in which he dwells; his depth is immeasurable; he strengthens moral qualities
by what he bestows; he augments sincerity by what he says; he evokes peace by his administration; his
transactions manifest ability, he is opportune in all his movements.
Forasmuch as he does not assert himself he is free from blame.

9

It is better to leave alone, than to grasp at fullness.
Sharpness, which results from filing, cannot be preserved.
None can protect the hall that is filled with gold and jade.
Opulence, honours, pride, necessarily bequeath calamity.
Merit established, a name made, then retirement – this is the way of Heaven.

10

By steadily disciplining the animal nature, until it becomes one pointed, it is possible to establish the Indivisible.

By undivided attention to the soul, rendering it passive, it is possible to become as an infant child.

By purifying the mind of phantasms, it is possible to become without fault.

By perfecting the people, and pacifying the empire, it is possible to prove non-attachment.

By functioning on the super-physical planes, it is possible to be independent of the lower mind.

By making intuition omniscient, it is impossible to discard knowledge.

Producing! Nourishing! Developing, without self-consciousness! Acting, without seeking the fruit!

Progressing, without thinking of growth! This is the abyss of energy.

11

Thirty spokes meet in one hub, but the need for the cart existed when as yet it was not. Clay is fashioned into vessels, but the need for the vessel existed when as yet it was not. Doors and windows are cut out to make a house, but the need for the house existed when as yet it was not. Hence there is a profitableness in that which is and a need in that which is not.

12

The five colours blind men's eyes.

The five tones deafen one's ears.

The five flavours blunt men's appetites.

Gallop and hunting derange men's minds.

Articles which are rare limit the freedom of men's actions.

On this account the holy man regards the stomach and not the eye.

He puts aside the one, that he may take the other in hand.

13

Equally fear favour and disgrace.

Regard a great calamity as you do your own body.

What is meant by "Equally fear favour and grace?" Favour should be disparaged. Gained or lost it arouses apprehension. Hence it is said, "Equally fear favour and disgrace."

What is meant by "regard a great calamity as you do your own body?" Why have I any sense of misfortune? Because I am conscious of myself. Were I not conscious of my body, what distresses would I have?

Therefore, it is only they who value their persons because of their obligation, who may be entrusted with the empire. It is only they who love themselves on account of their responsibilities, who may be charged with the care of the state.

14

Looked for but invisible – it may be named "colourless."

Listened for, but inaudible – it may be named "elusive."

Clutched at, but unattainable - it may be named "subtle."

These three cannot be unraveled by questioning for they blend into one.

Neither brighter above, nor darker below.

Its line, though continuous, is nameless, and in that it reverts to vacuity.
It may be styled "The form of the formless"; "The Images of the imageless"; in a word – "The indefinite."
Go in front of it and you will discover no beginning; follow after it and you will perceive no ending.
Lay hold of this ancient doctrine; apply it in controlling the things of the present day, you will then understand how from the first it has been the origin of everything.
Here, indeed, is the clue to the Tao.

15

Profound indeed were the most excellent among the ancients, penetrating, fathomless; inasmuch as they were fathomless it becomes necessary to employ far fetched symbols when speaking of them.
Irresolute – as if fording a stream in winter.
Timid – as though fearful of their neighbours.
Grave – as if they were guests.
Elusive – like ice about to melt.
Simple – like raw material.
Expansive – like the space between hills.
Turbid – like muddy water.
Who can still the turbid and make it gradually clear; or quiet the active so that by degrees it shall become productive? Only he who keeps this Tao, without desiring fullness. If one is not full it is possible to be antiquated and not newly fashioned.

16

Abstraction complete, quiescence maintained unalloyed, the various forms rise with one accord, and I observe that each returns again. All things thrive and increase, then each returns again to the root. This return to the root is called "stillness," or it may be described as a return to report that they have fulfilled their destiny. This report is called "the unchanging rule."
Knowledge of this unchanging rule is called "illumination." Those who are ignorant of it give way to abandon and to recklessness.
Knowledge of this unchanging rule leads to toleration.
Toleration leads to comprehension.
Comprehension leads to sovereignty.
Sovereignty leads to heavenlikeness.
Heaven-likeness leads to Tao.
Tao leads to continuity.
Though the body be no more, there is no danger.

17

First the supreme. Then a sense of separateness. Next preferences and eulogies. Lastly, fear. Then scorn.
Hence it is plain that lack of sincerity has its origins in superficial faith.
Cautious! They valued their words, accomplished their purposes, settled their affairs, and the people all said: "We are spontaneous."

18

The great Tao faded and there was benevolence and righteousness. Worldly wisdom and shrewdness appeared and there was much dissembling.
The family relationships no longer harmonious, there was filial piety and paternal love.
The state and the clans in anarchy, there was loyalty and faithfulness.

19

Abandon knowledge, discard wisdom – the people will gain a hundred fold.
Abandon the humanities, discard righteousness – the people will return to filial love.
Abandon cleverness, discard gain – robbers and thieves will be no more.
These three, being considered not sufficiently aesthetic, therefore many other devices were added.
Better observe simplicity, encourage primitiveness, lessen the number of private projects, and moderate desire.

20

Scholarship abandoned, sorrow vanishes.
Yes and yea, are they not almost alike?
Goodness and evil, are they not akin?
Untrammelled and without limits – yet that may not be lightly esteemed which all men reverence.
The multitude are joyful and merry – as though feasting on a day of sacrifice, or ascending a high tower in spring. I alone am anchored without giving any sign – like an infant, undeveloped.
My homeless heart wanders among the things of sense, as if it had nowhere to stay.
The multitude have enough and to spare – I alone am as one who has lost something.
Have I then the mind of a fool? Am I so very confused?
Ordinary men are bright enough. I alone am dull.
Ordinary men are full of excitement. I alone am heavy-hearted.
Boundless as the sea, drifting to and fro, as if without a place to rest.
All men have some purpose. I alone am thick-headed as a boor.
I am alone – differing from others, in that I reverence and seek the Nursing Mother.

21

The comprehensiveness of supreme energy is its conformity to the Tao.
The Tao considered as an entity is impalpable, indefinite. Indefinite, impalpable, within are concretions.
Impalpable, indefinite, within are shapes. Profound, obscure, within there is essence. This essence being supremely real, within is sincerity.
From the beginning until now it has not changed, and thus it has watched all the essentials. How do I know it has been thus will all principles? By what has just been said.

22

To be crooked is to be perfected; to be bent is to be straightened; to be lowly is to be filled; to be senile is to be renewed; to be diminished is to be able to receive; to be increased is to be deluded.
Therefore the Holy Man embraces unity, and becomes the world's model.
He is not self-regarding, therefore he is cognizant.

He is not egotistic, therefore he is distinguished.

He is not boastful, therefore he has merit.

He is not conceited, therefore he is superior.

Inasmuch as he strives with none, there are none in the world able to strive with him.

That ancient maxim – ‘To be crooked is to become perfected’ – was it an idle word? Verily, it includes the whole.

23

Few words are natural.

A whirlwind does not outlast the morning; a deluge does not outlast the day. Who produces these? The Heaven-Earth. If the Heaven-Earth cannot produce lasting phenomena, how much less can man?

Wherefore settling everything in accordance with the Tao, embodying the Tao they become identified with the Tao. Embodying its virtue, they become identified with virtue. Embodying loss, they become identified with loss.

Identified with Tao, they joyfully accept the Tao; identified with virtue, they joyfully accept virtue; identified with loss, they joyfully accept loss.

If sincerity is lacking it is because of superficial faith.

24

Who tiptoes, totters. Who straddles, stumbles. The self-regarding cannot cognize; the egotistic are not distinguished; the boastful are not meritorious; the self-conceited cannot excel. Such from the standpoint of the Tao are like remnants of food, or parasites, which all things probably detest. Hence, those who possess the Tao are not so.

25

There was a completed, amorphous something before the Heaven-Earth was born. Tranquil! Boundless! Abiding alone and changing not! Extending everywhere without risk. It may be styled “the world-mother.” I do not know its name, but characterize it – tae Tao. Arbitrarily forcing a name upon it I call it the Great. Great, it may be said to be transitory. Transitory, it become remote. Remote, it returns.

The Tao, then, is great; Heaven is great; Earth is Great; a king is also great. In space there are four that are great, and the king dwells there as one of them.

Man’s standard is the earth. Earth’s standard is the Heaven. Heaven’s standard is the Tao. The Tao’s standard is spontaneity.

26

Lightness has its roots in heaviness. Restlessness has a master in stillness. Therefore, the Holy Man travels all day without leaving the baggage wagon. Surrounded by sensuous enjoyments he remains peaceful and free.

How, then, can the Lord of ten thousand chariots regard his personality as of less importance than his royal trust? By levity he will lose his ministers; by restlessness he will lose his throne.

27

Good doers leave no tracks. True words have no defects. Skillful plans require no calculations. Able closers need no locks and bars, yet none can open what they shut. Real strength wants no cords, yet none can loose it.

It follows that the Holy Man when helping others, works in accordance with the unchanging goodness. Hence, he rejects none. He does the same when helping nature to develop. Therefore, he rejects nothing. This may be called "obscure perception."

Thus a Good Man is the bad man's instructor; the bad man the Good Man's material. Yet he does not esteem himself a teacher, nor does he love his material.

Although one may be wise, here he is deceived.

This is called "The Cardinal Mystery."

28

One conscious of virility, maintaining muliebrity, is a world-channel. From a world-channel the unchanging energy never departs. This is to revert to the state of infancy.

One conscious of brightness, placid in shade, is a world-model. In a world-model the unchanging energy remains undiminished. This is to revert to the unlimited.

One conscious of merit, content in disgrace, is a world-valley. In a world-valley the unchanging energy is sufficient. This is to revert to simplicity.

Simplicity scattered becomes capacity, and in the hands of the Holy Man, administrators.

Thus the Supreme Mandate may not be sundered.

29

I perceive that no desire can succeed which has as its objective the moulding of the state. The state possesses a divine capacity, which cannot be moulded.

To make is to mar; to grasp is to lose.

Thus in nature some things lead, others follow; some inspire, others expire; some are strong, some are weak; some survive, others succumb; hence, the Holy Man renounces excess, extravagance, exaltation.

30

When one uses the Tao in assisting his sovereign, he will not employ arms to coerce the state. Such methods easily react.

When military camps are established. Briers and thorns flourish. When great armies have moved through the land calamities are sure to follow.

The capable are determined, but no more. They will not venture to compel; determined, but not conceited; determined, but not boastful; determined, but not arrogant; determined because it cannot be helped; determined, but not forceful.

When things reach their prime, they begin to age. This cannot be said to be the Tao. What is Not the Tao soon ends.

31

The magnificence of the army cannot make it an auspicious weapon. It is possible that even inanimate

Nature detests it. Hence, one who possesses Tao has nothing to do with it.
The Master Thinker (the Sage) when at home honours the left. When leading troops he honours the right. Soldiers are instruments of ill omen. They are not agents for a Master Thinker. Only when inevitable will he employ them. What he most prizes is quiet and peace. He will not praise a victory. To do so would show delight in the slaughter of men. As for those who delight in the slaughter of men, the world is too small for the gratification of their desires.
When affairs are felicitous the left is honoured, but when they are inauspicious the right is honoured. The Second Officer is placed on the left, but the Commander-in-Chief is placed on the right. That is to say, his position is as if he were attending a funeral. The slayer of multitudes should bitterly weep and lament. Having fought and won it is as if he were presiding at a funeral.

32

Tao – the Eternally Nameless.
Though primordial simplicity is infinitesimal, none dare make it a public servant.
Were princes and monarchs able to maintain it, all creation would spontaneously submit.
Heaven and earth harmonized, there would be an abundance of nourishing agencies; the people unbidden, would cooperate of their own accord.
Names arose when differentiation commenced; once there were names it became important to know where to stop. This being known, danger ceased.
The Tao spread throughout the world, may be compared to mountain rivulets and streams flowing toward the sea.

33

Who knows men has discernment; who knows himself has illumination.
Who overcomes men has strength; who overcomes himself has determination. Who knows contentment has wealth.
Who acts vigorously has will.
Who never departs from his base, endures long; he dies, but does not perish; he lives eternally.

34

Supreme is the Tao! All pervasive; it can be on the left hand and on the right.
All things depend on it for life, and it denies none.
Its purposes accomplished, it claims no credit.
It clothes and fosters all things, but claims no lordship.
Ever desireless, it may be named "The Indivisible."
All things revert to it, but it claims no lordship. It may be named "The Supreme."
Because to the end it does not seek supremacy; it is able to accomplish great things.

35

Apprehend the inimitable conception, you attract the world; coming it receives no harm, but it tranquil, peaceful, satisfied.
Like transient guests, music and dainties pass away.
The Tao entering the mouth is insipid and without flavour; when looked at it evades sight; when listened

for it escapes the ear – (yet) its operations are interminable.

36

When about to inhale it is certainly necessary to open the mouth; when about to weaken it is certainly necessary to strengthen; when about to discard it is certainly necessary to promote; when about to take away it is certainly necessary to impart - this is atomic perception.

The weak overcome the strong.

Fish cannot leave the deeps.

The innerness of the government cannot be shown to the people.

37

The Tao – eternally actionless and the cause of all action!

Were princes and monarchs able to acquiesce the myriad existences would by degrees spontaneously transform. Transforming and wishing to function I would immediately guide by the simplicity of the nameless.

The simplicity of the nameless is akin to desirableness.

Desireless and at rest the world would naturally become peaceful.

38

Superior energy is non-action, hence it is energy.

Inferior energy will not resign action; hence, it is not energy.

Superior energy is actionless because motiveless.

Inferior energy acts from motive.

Superior magnanimity is active but motiveless.

Superior equity is active from motive.

Superior propriety is active; it bares its arm and asserts itself when it meets with no response.

Thus as the Tao recedes there are energies; as the energies recede there is magnanimity; as magnanimity recedes there is equity; as equity recedes there is propriety.

Inasmuch as propriety is the attenuation of conscientiousness it is the origin of disorder.

The beginnings of consciousness are flower of Tao, but the commencement of delusion.

Therefore the men who are great live with that which is substantial, they do not abide with realities, they do not remain with what is showy. The one they discard, the other they hold.

39

The things which from of old harmonized with the One are: The heavens, which through the One are clear; the earth, which through the One is reposeful; the gods, which through the One are spiritual; space, which through the One is full; whatever has form, which through the One develops; princes and monarchs, which through the One adjust the empire: these are all effects of the One.

Were the heavens not thus clear they would be liable to rend; were the earth thus not reposeful, it would be liable to frothiness; were the gods not thus spiritual, they would be liable to imbecility; were space thus not full, it would be liable to exhaustion; were that which had form not thus developed, it would be liable to annihilation; were princes and monarchs not thus regulated, their dignities and honours would be liable to a downfall.

Hence humility is the root of honour: lowliness the foundation of loftiness. It is on this account that princes and monarchs style themselves "kithless," "friendless," "unworthies." Do they not thus acknowledge humility as their root?

The enumeration of the parts of a carriage do not make a carriage.

Desire neither the polish of the gem, nor the roughness of the stone.

40

The movements of the Tao are cyclical; the sufficiency of the Tao is latency.

All that is, exists in being, being in non-being.

41

The true student hears of the Tao; he is diligent and practices it.

The average student hears of it; sometimes he appears to be attentive, then again he is inattentive.

The half hearted student hears of it; he loudly derides it. If it did not provoke ridicule it would not be worthy of the name – Tao.

Again there are those whose only care is phraseology.

The brilliancy of the Tao is an obscurity; the advance of the Tao is a retreat; the equality of the Tao is an inequality; the higher energy is as cosmic space; the greatest purity is as uncleanness; the widest virtue is as if insufficient; established virtue is as if furtive; the truest essence is as imperfection; the most perfect square

is cornerless; the largest vessel is last completed; the loudest sound has fewest tones; the grandest conception is formless.

The Tao is concealed and nameless, yet it is the Tao alone which excels in imparting and completing.

42

The Tao produced the One. The One produced two; the two produced three; the three produced all things.

Everything is permeated by the yin and the yang and vivified by the immaterial breath.

That which men hate is to be kithless, friendless and considered unworthy, but princes and dukes thus style themselves. From this it would appear that advantages are disadvantageous, and disadvantages are advantageous.

I teach what others have taught.

The violent and the fierce do not live out their years.

I shall be chief among the teachers.

43

The world's weakest drives the world's strongest.

The indiscernible penetrates where there are no crevices.

From this I perceive the advantage of non-action.

Few indeed in the world realize the instruction of the silence, or the benefits of inaction.

44

Fame or life, which is dearer? Life or wealth, which is more? Gain or loss, which is worse?
Excessive love implies excessive outlay. Immoderate accumulation implies heavy loss.
Who knows contentment meets no shame. Who knows when to stop incurs no danger. Such long endure.

45

The greatest attainment is as though incomplete, but its utility remains unimpaired.
The greatest fullness is as a void; but its utility is inexhaustible.
The greatest uprightness is as crookedness; the greatest cleverness as clumsiness; the greatest eloquence as reticence.
Motion overcomes cold; stillness conquers heat.
Purity and stillness are the world's standards.

46

When the empire is controlled by the Tao, riding horses are employed in agriculture; when the empire is without Tao, war horses are in every open space.
There is no sin greater than covetousness; no calamity greater than discontent; no fault greater than acquisitiveness.
Who therefore knows the contentment of content possesses unchanging content.

47

The world may be known without going out of doors.
The heavenly way (Tao) may be seen without looking through the window.
The further one goes the less one knows.
Hence the Holy Man arrives without traveling; names without looking; accomplishes without action.

48

The pursuit of study bring daily increase; the pursuit of Tao brings daily decrease; decrease upon decrease, until non-action is reached, whence all action proceeds.
Only continued non-concern will win the Empire; where there is concern there is an insufficiency for the task.

49

The Holy Man is not inflexible, he plans according to the needs of the people.
I would return good for good. I would also return good for evil. Thus goodness operates (or "thus all become good").
I would return trust for trust. I would also return trust for suspicion. Thus trust operates (or "thus all become trustworthy").
The Holy Man as he dwells in the world is very apprehensive concerning it, blending his heart with the

whole. Most men plan for themselves. The Holy Man treats every one as a child.

50

Birth is an exit; death an entrance.

Three in ten are ways of life; three in ten are ways of death; three in ten also of those who live move into the realm of death. Why is this? Because of their excessive strivings after life. It has been said that he who thoroughly understands how to care for life will not need to shun the rhinoceros or the tiger; he need not fear weapons even in the midst of battle. The rhinoceros finds no place into which to thrust his horn; the tiger no place into which to fix his claws; nor the sword a place into which to flesh its point. Why is this?

Because such a one is not moved by the thought of death.

51

When the Tao produces and its energy nourishes, nature forms and natural forces establish. On this account there is nothing that does not honour the Tao and reverence its energy. This honour and reverence are spontaneous, not the result of a mandate.

So the Tao produces. Its energy nourishes, increases, feeds, establishes, matures, controls, broods over. It produces, but keeps nothing for itself; acts, but does not depend on its actions; increases, but does not insist on having its own way. This indeed is the mystery of energy.

52

Everything has its origin in the mother of all under heaven

To know the mother the child must be perceived; the child being born the qualities of the mother must be maintained, to the end of life there will be no peril.

Close the doors of the senses, and the whole of life will be without care; open them, attend to the affairs of life and to the end deliverance will be impossible.

Perceive the germ, that is enlightenment.

Maintain weakness, that is stability.

Employ the light; revert to this enlightenment; no calamity will then be bequeathed to the body.

This is indeed to practice the unalterable.

53

When knowledge compels me to practice the supreme Tao, the danger lies in putting it into action.

The supreme Tao is a vast plain, yet the people prefer bypaths. The palace is magnificent, but the fields are full of weeds; the granaries are empty, but elegant clothes are worn; sharp two-edged swords are carried, fastidiousness in eating and drinking is displayed, many useless things are amassed – this is robbery and swaggering.

This is not the Tao!

54

Who plants well will not have his work uprooted; who embraces well will not lose what he holds; the offerings of his sons and grandsons will never end.

Who thus regulates himself has virtue which is genuine; who thus regulates his household has virtue which overflows; who thus regulates his neighbourhood has virtue which excels; who thus regulates the state has virtue which abounds; who thus regulates the world has virtue which is universal.

Therefore let every man prove himself; let each household, neighbourhood, and state do the same; let the world also follow the same course.

How do I know that it must be thus with the world? By this same (which has just been said).

55

Who cherishes energy in abundance is comparable to a child. Poisonous insects will not sting him; fierce beasts will not seize him; birds of prey will not strike him.

His bones are weak; his sinews pliable; his grip firm; unconscious of sex, his virility is active – the excellency of his physique. He may cry all day without become hoarse – this is the consummation of harmony.

Knowledge of harmony is called “The unalterable;” knowledge of the Unalterable is called “Illumination.”

Increase of life is called infelicity, the resting of the mind in the vitality of forms is called animality.

The corporeal begins to age as it nears its prime. This indeed is not the Tao. What is not the Tao soon ends.

56

Who knows does not speak; who speaks does not know.

Close the doors of the senses; blunt the sharp; unravel the confused; harmonize the dazzling; become one with the all. This is the Mystery of Unity. There will then neither be love nor hate; profit nor loss; favour or disgrace. It follows that in the universe there is nothing nobler.

57

Rule the Empire with uprightness. The Empire is won by non-concern. How do I know this? Thus: The more superstitious restrictions in the land the poorer the people; the more the people are concerned with the administration the more benighted the state and the clans; the more craftiness is displayed the greater the

number of novelties which arise. The more legislation there is the more thieves and robbers increase.

It is for these reasons that a sage has said: “I do nothing, but the people spontaneously reform. I love tranquility, and the people spontaneously become upright. I have no concerns, and the people naturally grow wealthy. I am without desire, and of their own free will the people revert to primitive simplicity.”

58

When the government is not in evidence the people are honest and loyal.

When the government is meddlesome the people are in want.

Misery! Happiness lies by its side! Happiness! Misery lurks underneath. He who understands the end has progressed beyond limitations.

The regular becomes irregular; the good becomes unpropitious. This has bewildered men from time immemorial!

Hence the Holy Man is a square which has not been cut, and whose corners have not been planed; he is straightforward without being reckless, and bright without being dazzling.

59

For the regulation of mankind and the service of heaven nothing equals reserve power. Reserve power means a speedy submission. Speedy submission implies a rich store of energy. A rich store of energy means the subjugation of everything. Everything being subdued none knows his limits. His limits being unknown his sovereign power is assured, having the root of sovereignty which endures for long. This may be described as a “deep taproot,” and a “durable peduncle,” – the perpetual vitality and continued manifestation of the Tao.

60

Govern a great state as you would fry a small fish.
Employ the Tao to establish the Empire and the daemons will display no energy; no that they are devoid of energy, but that they will not use it to man's detriment; (further) not only will man suffer no hurt from the daemons but he will not be injured by the sages.
When neither harm, the attributes of the Tao blend and converge.

61

A great country is lowly. Everything under heaven blends with it. It is like the female, which at all times and in every place overcomes the male by her quietude. Than quietude there is nothing that is more lowly. Therefore a great state gains the smaller state by yielding; while the smaller state wins the greater by submission. In the one case lowliness gains adherents, in the other it procures favours.
For a strong state there is no safer ambition than to desire to gather men and care from them; and for the weaker state there is nothing better than the ambition to become an indispensable servant.
When each obtains what each desires the strongest should be the humblest.

62

The Tao has of all things the most honoured place.
It is the good man's treasure, and that which protects the bad man.
Its excellent words may be displayed before all. Its noble deeds assist all men.
Why should a man be cast aside because he is bad?
Hence when the sovereign has been enthroned, and the chief ministers have been appointed, though one escorted by a team of horses, present the jade symbol of office, it would not equal the stilling of the heart, and entering this Tao.
What is the reason that this Tao has been held in such esteem from the beginning? May we not say that it is because those who seek receive, and those who are guilty escape by its (help)? Hence it becomes the most valued things under heaven.

63

Practice non-action. Be concerned with non-concern. Taste the flavourless. Account the small as great, and the few as many. For hatred return perfection.

Manipulate difficulties while they are easy. Take in hand great things while they are insignificant. Every difficult thing in the world had its origin in what was at first easy. Every great thing in the world was once significant. Therefore the Holy Man makes no distinctions and thus he is able to accomplish that which is great.

Small faith can be placed in promises lightly made.

The easier a matter is reckoned the more difficult it proves at the last; for this reason the Holy Man sees difficulties in everything, and therefore he encounters no difficulties.

64

Whatever is at rest can easily be taken in hand; while yet no omens have appeared plans can be easily formed.

What is brittle is easily broken; what is minute is easily scattered.

Act before necessity arises; regulate before disorder commences.

The trunk that can scarcely be embraced sprang from a tiny shoot; the tower that is nine stories high was raised from a mound of earth; the journey of a thousand li commenced when the foot was placed on the ground.

Who makes, mars; who grasps, loses.

The Holy man practices non-action, hence he never injures; he never grasps, hence he never loses. The majority are too eager for results in attending to their affairs, and spoil everything. There would be no such failures were they as cautious at the end as at the beginning.

Hence the Holy Man desires passionlessness; he does not prize articles that are rare; he studies to be unlearned; he reverts to that which the masses pass by. In this way he promotes the natural development of things without venturing to interfere.

65

From the most ancient of times those who have practiced the Tao have depended on the simplicity of the people rather than on their adroitness.

When the people are difficult to control it is because they possess too much worldly wisdom.

Who governs by worldly wisdom is a robber in the land; who governs without out is a blessing to the state.

To know these two axioms is to become a model. To understand how to be a model is indeed the mystery of energy.

Verily, deep and far-reaching is this mystery of energy. It is the opposite of all that is visible, but it leads to universal concord.

66

That which enables the rivers and the seas to become the rulers of all the water-courses in their ability to remain in the lowest; it is on this account that they are the rulers of them all. In like manner the Holy Man, if he wishes to direct the people must speak of himself as subject to them; if he wishes to lead them he must

put himself in the background. Hence the Sages are supreme, but the people are not burdened; they are in the vanguard, but the people are not harmed. For this reason the whole Empire delights to exalt them, and no one feels annoyance. Because they do to strive there is none who can strive with them.

67

It was once generally affirmed that the greater the Self the more impossible it was to compare it with anything else. Now it is just this greatness which makes it incomparable; should, however, a comparison be demanded, it would have to be described as the eternal, which is imperceptible. Now the Self has three

treasures, to which it clings as to inseparables: the first is compassion, the second, self-restraint, the third, nowhere venturing to claim precedence.

Compassionate – therefore irresistible!

Self-restrained – therefore enlarged!

Nowhere venturing to claim precedence – therefore efficient!

Nowadays men cast compassion on one side, yet expect to be irresistible! They discard self-restraint, yet look for enlargement; they forget to retire, yet demand precedence! – this is death.

As regards compassion, rely on it when you would contend, and you will overcome; rely on it when you would protect, and you will succeed. Heaven is ever ready to deliver because of the protection compassion brings.

68

The most skillful warriors are not warlike; the best fighters are not wrathful; the mightiest conquerors never strive; the greatest masters are ever lowly.

This is the glory of non-strife; and the might of utilization; these equal heaven, they were the goal of the ancients

69

Military commanders have a saying:

I dare not act as host but only as a guest; rather than advance an inch I would retire a foot.

This marching without moving; bearing the invisible arm; regarding the enemy as if he were not; grasping the sword that is not.

There is no calamity greater than making light of the enemy; to make light of the enemy is to endanger my retention of the treasures. Hence once the opposing forces have met it is the pitiful who conquer.

70

It is very easy to comprehend my teachings and to put them into practice. Yet there is no one in the world who is able either to comprehend, or to practice them.

There is an originating principle for speech, an authoritative law for conduct, but because this knowledge is lacking I am unknown. Those who know Me are few; those who imitate Me are worthy. Hence the Holy Man wears coarse garments, but carries a jewel in his bosom.

71

The highest attainment is to know non-knowledge. To regard ignorance as knowledge is a disease. Only be feeling the pain of this disease do we cease to be diseased. The perfected man, because he knows the pain of it, is free from this disease. It is for this reason that he does not have it.

72

The limits of the greatest fear have been reached when the people cease to fear that which is to be feared.

Neither regard your lot as mean, nor despise the conditions of your birth, for that which is not despised arouses no disgust.

Hence although the Holy Man knows himself he makes no display; although he loves himself he seeks no reputation. On this account he rejects the one while clinging to the other.

73

The recklessly rash die. The cautiously courageous live. Of these two courses it is uncertain which is advantageous and which is disadvantageous, for who can explain why heaven disapproves? Therefore even the Holy Man feels a difficulty here. This is the way of heaven:

Goodwill, which surely overcomes.

Silence, which certainly responds.

Without being summoned, spontaneously arriving.

Acting leisurely, but planning effectively.

Heaven's net spreads everywhere, wide in mesh, yet losing nothing.

74

Why use death as a deterrent, when the people have no fear of death?

Even supposing they shrank from death as from a monster, and by playing on their terror I could slay them, should I dare?

There is one who inflicts sentence of death. To usurp his functions and to kill would be to assume the role of Master-Carpenter. There are few who can act as Master-Carpenter without cutting their hands.

75

The people suffer from famine because of the multitude of taxes consumed by their superiors. Because of this they suffer from famine. The people are difficult to govern because of the officiousness of their superiors; because of this they are difficult to govern. Men are continually dying because they lust after life; because of this they frequently die.

It is only those with whom life is no object who truly value life.

76

At birth man is supple and weak, at death rigid and strong. So with inanimate nature – say the vegetable creation – in its early growth it is pliable and brittle, at death it is decayed and withered. It follows that rigidity and strength are the way to death; pliability and gentleness the way to life.

Hence a soldier who is arrogant cannot conquer; the tree which is strong is doomed.

The firm and the great occupy the lower place, the pliable and the meek the higher.

77

The Divine Way is like the drawing of a bow, it brings down the high and exalts the low. Where there is superfluity it takes away, where there is deficiency it imparts. It is the way of heaven to diminish abundance, and supplement deficiency.

The way of man is not so. He depletes the deficient, that he may supplement the superfluous.

Who is able to have a superabundance for the service of the world? Only the possessor of the Tao!

Hence the Holy Man acts without priding himself on his actions, completes his work without lingering on it; he has no desire to display his superiority.

78

Nothing is so flexible as water, yet for attacking that which is hard nothing surpasses it. There is nothing which supplants it.

The weak overcomes the strong, the soft control the hard. Everyone knows this, but no one practices it.

Hence a Sage has said – “Who bears his country’s reproach is hailed as the lord of his nation’s altars.

Who bears his country’s misfortunes is called the Empire’s chief.”

Truth, when expressed in speech, appears paradoxical.

79

To compromise a great hate leaves ill-will behind; that is only a bleeding which produces tranquility.

Therefore the Holy Man does not pry into other people's affairs, even when he holds the left-hand bond, possessing the attributes of the Tao, he quietly holds his own; he who lacks the qualities of Tao strives to put everybody right.

It is heaven’s way to be without favourites, and to be always on the side of the good man.

80

A state may be small, and the population sparse, yet the people should be taught not to rely on force; they should be made to comprehend the gravity of death, and the futility of emigration. Then, though they had boats and carts, they would have no use for them; though they had armour and weapons they would not display them. They should be taught to return to the use of the quippo; to be content with their food, their clothing, their dwellings, and to be happy in their traditions. Though neighbouring states were within sight, and the people should hear the barking of their dogs and the crowing of their cocks, they would grow old and die without visiting them.

81

Sincere words are not (necessarily) pleasant, nor are pleasant words (necessarily) sincere.

The good are not (necessarily) skillful debaters, not are skillful debaters (necessarily) good men.

The wise are not (necessarily) well informed, nor are the well informed (necessarily) wise.

The Holy Man does not accumulate. He works for others, yet ever has abundance for himself; he gives to others, yet himself ever possesses superabundance.

The divine way is advantageous, without danger; the way of the Sages is effective without struggle.

